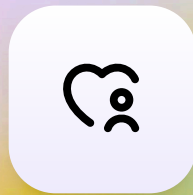




The AI Family Guide, by ChatGPT

Developed in partnership with Parent Zone



Foreword

by Vicki Shotbolt, CEO of Parent Zone

AI has become part of all of our lives - helping with routine tasks and transforming the technology we all use and enjoy. For teens, AI has quickly become a useful tool supporting creativity, study and broadening access to information. It's likely your teen is already making use of ChatGPT and other AI tools whether that's for help with studying or finding out information.

As with any significant change to our digital environment, there are questions. For parents the questions include 'Are tools like ChatGPT safe?' and 'Should my teen be using ChatGPT to help with homework?' It can feel like a minefield but it doesn't need to be overwhelming. You don't need tech skills to help your teen navigate even the latest advances in technology. Helping them to develop their curiosity, individuality and independence should be the aim, with tools supporting and facilitating that.

This guide is designed to help. It includes ideas to help with the conversations you're having about AI, and if you haven't started those yet, some ideas to get them going. Talking about technology and the digital world your teen lives in is one of the best and easiest ways to keep them safe. It's also a fun way to connect and discover things about your teen even you might not know.

Using the built-in ChatGPT parental controls like quiet time can help reinforce the boundaries you agree on as a family. Boundaries that often stick better if everyone in the family tries to follow them. It's also true that there is real value in having 'ages and stages' based boundaries. Nothing upsets a teenager more than feeling their younger sibling is being given more flexibility than they are. Adjusting your expectations as your children mature shows you are responding to their needs and giving them appropriate levels of autonomy.

Used responsibly, AI tools can open up huge opportunities for families. Whether that's helping with your workload so you have more time to enjoy as a family or helping your teen with study tasks that have moved beyond your own ability to help, AI can be a game changer. Of course there are questions and concerns. The speed of change can be difficult to keep up with which is why ChatGPT continues to evolve its approach and to update its resources. That's also why, as a parenting organisation we are so pleased to be helping them to get that right. We hope this guide will help you to understand how ChatGPT works and how it can support your family in everyday life as well as how to use it responsibly.

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The AI models that power AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, are an important new technology that can help people build, discover and create - whether that's expressing creativity, learning something new, or creating new opportunities.

Understanding how AI models work can help you (and your teens) understand how to use it more thoughtfully, safely, and confidently.

Here's a bit more information on how AI works:

AI models learn from huge amounts of information

- Large language models (also known as LLMs, like the models that power ChatGPT) are trained by reading huge amounts of text - like publicly available websites - so they can learn patterns in language.
- During training, the model guesses the next word in a sentence, gets feedback when it's wrong, and slowly improves through billions of examples.
- Over time, it learns grammar, information about the world, and how to analyse patterns in data. For example, if it sees the beginning of a sentence like "Bread and...," it learns that "butter" is a likely continuation based on patterns it has seen before.
- Because of this training, AI can generate responses that sound natural, relevant, and tailored to a user's question. It isn't pulling a stored answer from a database—it's generating language that fits the context of the conversation.

AI can complete tasks for you

- Codex is your personal assistant for work. It researches, organises, drafts, analyses, and can automate recurring tasks on your computer.
- The same tools that make Codex great for Coding, make it great for everyday work. Use it when you want Codex to work directly with files on your computer or you want Codex to create, edit and save outputs directly on your computer. You can find out more [here](#).

AI is especially good at including links and references

- When you're using ChatGPT or another large language model, you might notice answers that include links or references. This is more likely when the question depends on recent or changing information, or when you explicitly ask for sources.
- In those moments, search can help the model check up-to-date details or point you to sources you can verify yourself. It doesn't happen in every conversation because many questions don't require the web, and sometimes the best response is based on explanation, brainstorming, or the information already in your chat.
- If you want a more thorough, source-based answer, you can use tools like ChatGPT search or Deep Research (if it's available on your account).
- ChatGPT can now search the web in a much better way than before. You can get fast, timely answers with links to relevant web sources, without needing to visit a separate search engine.
- To provide relevant responses to your questions, ChatGPT search sometimes partners with other search providers. When it does, ChatGPT search typically rewrites your query into one or more targeted queries that it sends those providers.

AI can make things up

- Even when ChatGPT provides sources, it can still make mistakes - like misunderstanding what a source says, mixing details from different places, misquoting, or filling in gaps with something that sounds plausible.
- These mistakes are often called 'hallucinations': the model generates a response that seems confident and fluent but isn't actually grounded in verified information.
- Hallucinations are more likely when a question is ambiguous, when details are very complex or specific, or when the answer depends on more recent information. That's why it's important to use critical thinking and double-check claims.
- We work hard to improve model accuracy with each model. Our latest default model GPT-5.5 Instant has significantly improved accuracy across the board, with 52.5% fewer hallucinated claims than GPT-5.3 Instant.
- If links are included, read the sources directly and make sure they really support the answer - especially for quotes, statistics, names, and anything high-stakes.

Make AI work for you

- While the way that AI tools are built means that they have some vulnerabilities, AI models are also very good at explaining why they did what they did and what they did wrong.
- Tools from OpenAI, like ChatGPT search and Deep Research, can access more recent information from the internet to inform answers.
- You should always check sources and verify things like quotes, technical information or references to external documents.

ChatGPT equips parents and young people with new technology that can help families build, discover and create - whether that's expressing creativity, learning something new, supporting everyday family life or creating new opportunities. At the same time, different features can support the different needs of both parents and teens.

ChatGPT Images: The “creative + practical” feature

ChatGPT Images 2.0 is a new era of Image Generation. This state-of-the-art model can take on complex visual tasks and produce precise, immediately usable visuals. Compared with prior versions, Images 2.0 is significantly better at following detailed instructions, rendering dense text, placing objects accurately, handling a wider range of aspect ratios, and generating images across more languages.

- Images 2.0 is our first image model with thinking capabilities. When a thinking model is selected in ChatGPT, Images 2.0 can search the web for real-time information, create multiple distinct images from one prompt, and double-check its own outputs.
- With both intelligence from OpenAI’s reasoning models and a vast understanding of the visual world, this model moves image generation from rendering to strategic design, from a tool to a visual system, helping people turn ideas into outputs they understand, share, teach with and build from.

ChatGPT Images

For parents



Supporting revision and learning with visual explainers



Helping organise birthdays, celebrations or milestone events



Finding inspiration for teen bedrooms, study setups and meal ideas

For teenagers and families together



Designing moodboards, wallpapers, posters or creative content for hobbies and interests



Turning revision topics into visual diagrams and GCSE study aids



Creating birthday invites, presentation slides or graphics for clubs, teams and school projects

Study Mode: The “tutor” feature

A ChatGPT learning experience built for university students, designed to help you work through problems step by step - not just get an answer.

- Learning is the top use case on ChatGPT. Study mode meets students with guiding questions tailored to their goals and skill level, helping build deeper understanding.
- Developed with global learning experts, Study mode uses custom system instructions shaped with teachers, scientists, and pedagogy specialists to support effective learning.
- Personalised learning: With interactive prompts, knowledge checks, and the option to upload course materials, Study mode adapts to each student’s needs.

To access study mode type /Study on mobile or web and select “Study and learn”.

Study Mode

For parents



Helping teens stay on track with homework, revision, and learning together



Building healthy study routines and structure at home



Feeling more confident supporting schoolwork and exam preparation

For teenagers and families together



Revising for GCSEs, A-Levels or class tests



Getting help understanding topics at the right level



Practising essays, presentations and problem-solving skills

Deep Research: The “deep dive” feature

Deep Research is an agentic capability - an AI system that can reason, plan, and execute multi-step tasks without constant human oversight - to conduct multi-step research on the internet for complex tasks. It accomplishes in tens of minutes what would take a human many hours.

- You give it a prompt, and ChatGPT will find, analyse, and synthesise hundreds of online sources to create a comprehensive report at the level of a research analyst.
- It leverages reasoning to search, interpret, and analyse massive amounts of text, images, and PDFs on the internet, pivoting as needed in reaction to information it encounters.

Deep Research

For parents



Researching schools, tutoring support



Comparing family costs, extracurricular activities or educational support options



Exploring practical questions like sixth forms, study support or local opportunities for teens

For teenagers and families together



Exploring future career paths, universities, courses or work experience ideas



Building revision guides and diving deeper into subjects they're interested in






Researching hobbies, skills or beginner courses independently

Codex: The “coding” feature




Codex is OpenAI’s app for helping people build software but lots of people are also finding it useful for everyday work. You can download it [here](#) to try some of the features.

Codex

For parents

-  Automating everyday admin tasks like schedules, reminders or family planning tools
-  Creating personalised learning tools to support revision
-  Exploring coding and AI together through simple shared projects

For teenagers and families together

-  Building simple games, apps or creative coding projects
-  Turning revision topics into quizzes and flashcards
-  Experimenting with coding, websites and tech skills




Voice Mode: The “hands-free parenting” feature

With Voice Mode, you can speak to ChatGPT out loud:




- It listens, responds naturally, and even lets you interrupt
- Perfect for when your hands are busy or you just don't feel like typing

Voice Mode

For parents

-  Asking questions hands-free while cooking, commuting or managing busy family routines
-  Getting help with meal ideas, planning and everyday organisation
-  Exploring topics together through more natural back-and-forth conversations

For teenagers and families together

-  Practising presentations, languages or interview questions out loud
-  Talking through revision topics in a more conversational way
-  Getting quick answers, brainstorming ideas or support while multitasking

File uploads & analysis: The “organised parent” feature

Attach a file of any kind to your prompt, and ask ChatGPT to work on it, provide you with a quick answer, or create a new file.

- Upload PDFs, worksheets, school docs → ChatGPT can summarise or explain them
- Create and analyse spreadsheets and data

File uploads & analysis

For parents



Breaking down school reports, exam grade information or school newsletters



Understanding information about the apps, games and platforms their teens use



Organising family budgets, schedules and household planning documents

For teenagers and families together



Turning class notes, homework sheets or revision materials into quizzes and study guides



Simplifying difficult topics or getting clearer explanations from uploaded documents



Organising coursework, timetables and project materials in one place

Shape how ChatGPT works for your family

Young people deserve technology that expands opportunity and protects their well-being. Our parental controls give families flexibility to guide how it's used at home, with more safeguards and ways to stay connected.

Our teen principles for users under 18 years old are anchored in four guiding commitments. Users must be at least 13 years old to use ChatGPT. In addition to the below defaults, parents have more tools available in parental controls to further customise their child's settings.

01

Put teen safety first even when it may conflict with other goals

02

Promote real-world support by encouraging offline relationships and trusted resources

03

Treat teens like teens neither condescending to them nor treating them as adults

04

Be transparent by setting clear expectations

Age prediction

- Teens are growing up with AI but aren't grown-ups yet. We believe ChatGPT should meet them where they are: the way ChatGPT responds to a 15-year-old should differ from the way it responds to an adult.
- All users, regardless of the age provided, have baseline protections safeguards when using our tools. These include built-in protections designed to reduce harmful outputs, transparency and users controls, including model choice, measures designed to avoid giving the impression that outputs are human-generated, use of advanced
- On top of that, when fully rolled out in Europe, age prediction helps determine whether an account likely belongs to someone under 18, so the right experience and safeguards can be applied to teens.
- In the UK, if you enter your age as under 18 at sign up or our system estimates you are "likely under 18" we apply teen safeguards. It means that an enhanced age-appropriate experience is activated with additional protections designed to reduce exposure to sensitive or potentially harmful content, for example, depictions of self-harm. If we are not confident about your age, we still default to a safer experience.

How to set up parental controls

To set up parental controls, you can send an invite to your teen to connect accounts. After the teen accepts, you can manage the teen's settings from their own account. Teens can also invite you to connect. When accounts are linked, parents can:

- Switch off memory
- Switch off image generation
- Switch off voice mode
- Set quiet hours
- Receive safety notifications
- And more

Once linked, you can customise your teen's experience in ChatGPT in a simple control page in account settings. If a teen unlinks their account, you will be notified.

By learning how to use AI responsibly, you'll be better equipped to guide your teenager to do the same

Use AI as a partner, not a replacement

- AI is great at generating ideas quickly, explaining concepts in different ways, and helping you organise your thoughts. But it doesn't have your life experience, relationships, or full context - and sometimes it can sound confident even when it's mistaken.
- Humans and AI have different strengths, and that's the point. AI can help you understand information more quickly, but you are the one who decides what's true, what's fair, what's appropriate, and what you actually believe.
- So, if your teen is writing an essay, AI might help them to organise their ideas or suggest outlines, but their thoughts, voice, and opinions still need to lead.
- Similarly, if you wake up with a headache, ChatGPT can help you prepare for a doctor's visit by summarising symptoms or making a list of questions. But it isn't a doctor, it cannot offer you a medical diagnosis, and it shouldn't be your final source for medical advice.

AI can help you think - but it can't truly support you emotionally

- Using AI safely isn't just about accuracy, it's also about knowing when human judgment and care matter most, particularly when talking to AI models about things that are emotional or sensitive
- OpenAI continuously works to make its models safe – for example, by building features that help detect emotional distress, prompting users to take breaks, and guiding people to trusted resources when needed.
- But even with these safeguards, ChatGPT can't truly understand your life the way a person can—and it isn't a substitute for professional help.

“The life experience parents have is so much more valuable to their teens than extensive technical know how.”

Vicki Shotbolt
CEO of Parent Zone

AI can sound confident and feel more personal than previous technologies

- That’s because it’s trained on patterns in human language and generates responses by predicting the next words that are most likely to fit what you asked.
- While the model is designed and instructed not to impersonate humans or mislead users into thinking they are interacting with a human, the result can feel natural—sometimes even like ChatGPT “gets” you – making it easier to believe what it says or to overrely on it for support. It’s important to remember that ChatGPT is still an AI tool; it can get things wrong and should be used judiciously, not as the sole or final source of truth.
- AI can help you think, learn, and put your thoughts into words, but it can’t replace human care, connection, or expertise. If something feels urgent, don’t wait for an AI response, get help from a real person right away.

Fact check and slow down

- Just as with any online information, it's important to fact-check, question what you see, and use your critical thinking skills.
- You can do this by cross-checking facts using ChatGPT's search functionality, links and trusted websites presented in certain answers.
- It's always helpful to pause and ask yourself where ChatGPT's information came from and to be cautious if there are no clear sources.
- You can also ask ChatGPT to double-check itself ("Are you sure?" "Can you cite sources?") and then verify details elsewhere.

Check out your Data Controls to make choices about your data

- AI allows for personalised learning and experiences tailored to your needs, but it's important to remember how your information is used and the choices you have to control it.
- In settings, you can: customise your experience with Memory, decide if your chats are used to improve our models for everyone, export your chat history, and delete or archive your chats. Choose what feels right to you.

Most teens are already experimenting with AI - sometimes for school, sometimes for creativity, sometimes just out of curiosity. You don't have to be an expert to guide them. The goal is the same as with any new technology: keep the conversation open, set clear expectations, and help your teen build good judgment.

Employ the same strategies you use with other technology

- Just like with video games or mobile phones, parents can set clear expectations and talk openly about what their teen is doing online.
- This means establishing shared boundaries, reinforcing critical thinking, and encouraging responsible use that supports learning, creativity, and wellbeing. In practice, it can help to ask your teen to show you how they use AI—so you're seeing real examples, not just hearing a general description.
- Try a “show me” approach: pick a few everyday scenarios and walk through them together, including how they check whether something is reliable.

Try asking:

Can you show me how you'd use ChatGPT for something routine—like planning a dinner for vegetarian guests or brainstorming a weekend activity?

Can you show me a recent prompt you used for school (you can remove anything personal). What did you ask, and how did you decide whether the answer was good?

If ChatGPT gave you a confident answer that was wrong, how would you notice? What's your 'double-check' step?

If we made a couple of family rules about AI (like when and where to use it), what do you think would be fair, and what would help you actually follow them?

Build critical thinking about AI

- Ask your teen open-ended questions about how the technology works, what information it might use, and how it could shape their teen’s experiences.
- For example, asking “How do you think this chatbot knows what to say?” or “What might it get wrong?” encourages teens to analyse, not just accept, AI outputs. This can help them become thoughtful users rather than passive consumers.

Try asking:

How has ChatGPT been helpful to you?

If ChatGPT gave you an answer that sounded right but you weren’t totally sure, how would you double-check it?

What kinds of questions do you think ChatGPT is good at answering, and what kinds is it not so good at?

Have you ever seen it get something wrong? How did you notice?

Clarify what AI can and can't do

Teens may overestimate AI's abilities. As a parent, you can explain that AI doesn't "know" them personally, can make mistakes, and may not always give trustworthy advice - especially on sensitive topics like health, relationships, or identity - and that teens should talk to a parent, teacher, or another trusted adult when concerned.

Try asking:

If ChatGPT gave you an answer about something important, like your health or your future plans, what are some signs you'd want to double-check it or ask an adult about it?

Can you think of a situation where AI might seem helpful, but really you'd rather hear from someone who knows you?

Talk about emotional and social impacts

AI tools can feel personal or “human,” including for teens. Parents can help teens reflect on how they feel after using AI, clarify the difference between human and machine interactions, and talk about healthy boundaries with technology.

Try asking:

After you use ChatGPT, do you usually feel more relaxed, more stressed, or about the same?

Do you ever talk to it about how you’re feeling? Are there situations for which you think talking to a friend, family member, or counselor might be more useful?

If a friend told you they wanted to talk to more people rather than AI, what would you want to say to them?

Help guide your teen's experience with parental controls

ChatGPT's parental controls are designed to support families and put teens' wellbeing first. When a parent and teen link accounts, parents can manage select settings for ChatGPT, set quiet hours when ChatGPT can't be used, manage privacy and content controls, and receive safety alerts in certain rare situations involving acute distress. You can of course consider revisiting settings as your teen matures.

Try asking:

Which ChatGPT features do you find most useful, and which would you want us to limit (voice, image generation, etc.)?

What would be fair 'quiet hours' so ChatGPT won't be used late at night or during school?

If ChatGPT ever sent me a safety alert, how would you want me to respond? What would feel most respectful and helpful to you?

Encourage balanced tech use

AI tools should support learning, play, or creativity - not replace real-world experiences, friendships, or critical thinking. You can help teens set time limits and ensure AI is part of a healthy, balanced digital life.

Try asking:

What are the ways ChatGPT actually makes your day better - school, hobbies, planning?

Are there times when you think you're using it too much and it might get in the way of other things you care about?

If we picked a 'no-screens' time each day, when would work best for you?

Are there times when it might make more sense to speak with a person or seek out an expert source?

Stay informed together

- AI is evolving quickly. Parents don't need to know everything, but showing curiosity and learning alongside their teen sends a powerful message: being informed is part of being safe.
- With ChatGPT's study mode, for example, you and your teen can work through problems step by step instead of just getting a quick answer.

Try asking:

Can you show me something cool or useful you've done with ChatGPT recently?

Are there any settings or features you're curious about that we should explore together?

If you could tell other parents one thing about how teens really use AI, what would you say?

Keep the conversation open

It's also important that teens feel comfortable talking openly about how they're using AI. The following tips have been shared by Parent Zone to help parents have open and honest conversations with teens:

- Let your teen know they can come to you without fear of judgement if something online feels confusing, uncomfortable, or if they feel they may be relying on ChatGPT too much.
- Be open to conversations about how your teen is using AI, even if it involves things you're unsure or concerned about.
- Work through questions together to find an approach everyone feels comfortable with.
- Focus on building trust and curiosity, rather than trying to know everything or control every interaction.

Read more about OpenAI's Teen Safety Blueprint here: openai.com/index/introducing-child-safety-blueprint

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology that can perform tasks that normally require human thinking — like understanding language or recognising images.

Model The “brain” behind AI — a system trained to recognise patterns and generate responses.

Prompt What you type or say to AI to get a response (basically, your instruction or question).

Machine Learning How AI learns — by analysing lots of data and improving over time without being explicitly programmed.

Training Data The information AI learns from — like public websites.

Generative AI

AI that can create things — like text, images, or audio.

Hallucination

When AI gives an answer that sounds confident but may be incorrect or unsupported.

Algorithm

A set of rules or steps the AI follows to solve a problem or make a decision.

Agent (or Agentic Capability)

A tool that can take actions for you - like researching, organising, or completing tasks - with different levels of human guidance.

Safety & Controls

Tools and settings that help manage how AI is used — like content filters, parental controls, and privacy settings.

About OpenAI

OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, is an AI research and deployment company dedicated to ensuring that general-purpose artificial intelligence benefits everyone. For more information, please visit openai.com.

About Parent Zone

Parent Zone makes parenting easier in a complex digital world. We deliver expert insight and support to help families navigate social media, smartphones, chatbots, age ratings and emerging AI. We translate complex tech and policy change into trusted, practical information and resources for families and the professionals who support them.